

My name is Chris O'Brien, and I am a twenty-four year old Connecticut resident and native. I also happen to be a quadriplegic due to an injury I sustained in a diving accident nearly six years ago. An experience such as mine is a traumatic life-altering event, and one that leaves you asking endless amounts of questions. For example, how will I now access my home? Or how do I go about receiving the medical supplies that I now need to live a healthy life? Or how will I ever get back to work?

Answering those types of questions requires an understanding of disabilities, as well as access to the network of hard to find resources. This is where the Connecticut Independent Living Centers come in to play. Our state's centers are staffed with individuals who are experts at helping answer an array of questions.

I have personally benefitted from the resources offered by our centers. Roughly two years ago I was interested in returning to work, but did not know where to start. I reached out to my local center, Access Independence, and they were able to help. Since then I have been fortunate enough to work as an Independent Living Advocate at the center, where I am able to help others in the same way I was helped. However, this will no longer be possible with the proposed state budget cuts. Please consider the ramifications that will be endured should the centers be forced to close. We are requesting that the budget be restored to the full \$528,000.

Thank you for your time.